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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Friday, May 20, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "CANNING CHECK-UP". Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

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My friend Helen is responsible for what I'm going to say today. Maybe you remember her -- she's the friend I told you about last January -- the one who knows so many interesting ways to use canned meat. Well, last week she walked into my office looking like a magazine artist's idea of spring. She had on a green suit and a perky hat. She brought me some flowers from her garden and told me all about how things were going on the farm.

According to Helen the baby chicks are coming along unusually well this spring. (She invited me out to a chicken dinner the Fourth of July). The fruit trees were promising a good crop, though it's a little early to tell. And the vegetable garden was looking fine, she said.

And then the conversation switched to canning equipment. Helen was in town to get new rubbers for her glass jars. And she had the lid to her steam pressure canner out in the car. She had brought it in to check up on the pressure gage.

Which reminded me, and now I'm reminding you, that it's always well to check up on all canning equipment before the summer fruits and vegetables come in from the orchard and garden.

Of course, if we're talking of vegetables -- the big piece of equipment is the steam pressure canner. For peas, beans, corn -- practically all vegetables except tomatoes- are nonacid foods. And nonacid foods require processing under pressure.

Water baths--or steam canners without pressure--or oven canners do not sterilize the nonacid foods in a reasonable length of time. For the temperature in them never gets above boiling. And that's not high enough to kill the dangerous or troublesome bacteria in nonacid foods in the time you have for home canning. Canning beans or peas without a steam pressure canner may be dangerous as well as wasteful.

The other day I cam across this list of points to look for in selecting a steam pressure canner. And now I'll pass them on to you.

First--according to this list--the good steam pressure canner is built for long, hard use. The material is sturdy. The top fits snugly--so snugly that no steam has a chance to leak out. It doesn't matter what kind of fasteners are on the canner. They may be clamps--or lugs--or a strong band--just so they hold the lid on to make the canner airtight.

Second--the steam pressure canner needs to be fairly large. Experienced canners say not to try to can with one that has less than an 18-quart capacity. Of course, 18-quart capacity means liquid capacity--it doesn't mean that the canner will process 18 quart jars at one time.

The number of containers a canner will hold varies with the shape of the canner. But usually a canner with a liquid capacity of 18 quarts will hold about 5 quart glass jars--or 8 pint glass jars. Or if you use tin cans, 8 number 3 cans or 14 number 2 cans will go into a canner with an 18-quart liquid capacity.

Those who do a lot of canning may want one of the canners that hold more than this--one that has a 25- or a 30-quart liquid capacity. Small pressure cookers with a capacity of only 10 or 12 quarts are for cooking rather than canning. It's difficult to can with them successfully because one of the first essentials in processing is a constant temperature. And in these small canners it's hard to keep the temperature at the exact place you want it.

Now the third point on the list--the lid of the steam pressure canner. The lid has on it three important fittings--a pressure gage--a petcock--and a safety valve. The petcock is the air outlet. The valve is a safety device to let off excess steam. And the pressure gage indicates how hot it is inside the canner. The hand on the face of the gage tells the number of pounds pressure. And this corresponds directly with the temperature inside--the higher the pressure--the hotter the temperature. For instance, 10 pounds pressure corresponds to a temperature of 240 degrees Fahrenheit.

If you already have a steam pressure canner you'll want to check these three parts. See that the opening to the petcock and safety valve are really open and that both are in good working order.

Check to see if the pressure gage measures accurately. It may be a little bit "off" after you've used it for some time. It can be checked with a master gage or a maximum thermometer. Your home demonstration agent will be able to help you with this. Or you may want to send the lid in to the manufacturer to have the gage checked and any other repairs made.

And that's the end of the instructions I found for the steam pressure canner But just because I've spent most of my time on this piece of equipment I don't mean to suggest that all canning is done with a steam pressure canner. The acid foods--the fruits and tomatoes--are most satisfactorily processed in a water bath.

Besides checking on these big pieces of equipment you'll also want to take stock of the jars or cans you have on hand--see that wire clamps fit tightly--that there's a lid for every jar.

And if you use glass jars you'll need fresh rubber rings. Used rubbers or even unused rubbers left over from last year will not do. Here's a simple way to test rubbers. Double the rubber-press it tightly between your fingers. The rubber shouldn't crack. If it stands this test make doubly sure by pulling the rubber to twice its length. It should snap back into its original shape.

And that's all the reminders I have time for today. But you'll find that it's a very comfortable feeling to know that your canning equipment is ready at least one jump ahead of the summer garden surplus.

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